

FROM THE FIELD

JUNE–JULY 2004

Note: The appearance of observations in this section does not suggest verification of acceptance of a record. Records need to be documented and submitted to the Checklist and Records Committee for consideration.

This summer's season provided some exciting news of rare birds and broadened our knowledge concerning breeding birds in the state. The highlight this season was the unlikely discovery of a Limpkin in the Atlanta area. Many area birders saw the bird, and excellent photographs were obtained of this rare species in Georgia. Some interesting reports of breeding birds were received this season as well. Species like Ovenbird, Worm-eating Warbler, Song Sparrow, Pine Siskin and House Finch are beginning to show signs of possible expansion south. A summer report of Brown Creeper from Rabun Co. may be another indicator that this species does indeed breed in the Georgia mountain region. Throw in a few very late or very early migrating species like Surf Scoter, Northern Harrier, Black Tern, Bank and Cliff Swallows, Dark-eyed Junco and White-throated and White-crowned Sparrows, and we had the makings of a very intriguing summer season.

Abbreviations used include: ACOGB - Annotated Checklist of Georgia Birds, 2003, Beaton, Giff et al., GOS Occ. Publ. No. 14; AWEC - Arrowhead Wildlife Education Center in Floyd Co.; AWMA - Altamaha Waterfowl Management Area in McIntosh Co.; CRC - Checklist and Records Committee; CRNRA - the Cochran Shoals Unit of the Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area; ELHLAF - E.L. Huie Land Application Facility in Clayton Co.; ENWR - the Bradley Unit of the Eufaula National Wildlife Refuge in Stewart Co.; KMT - Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park in Cobb Co.; LSSI - Little St. Simons Island; m.ob. - many observers; MBBP - Merry Brothers Brickyard Ponds; NWR - National Wildlife Refuge; v.ob. - various observers; SCSP - Sweetwater Creek State Park in Douglas Co.; and WMA - Wildlife Management Area.

SPECIES ACCOUNTS

MOTTLED DUCK - Several breeding pairs were found at the AWMA and on LSSI during the period. (Brandon Noel, Pierre Howard).

NORTHERN PINTAIL - There were several reports of two birds seen at ELHLAF throughout the period. The latest report was on 17 July (m.ob.).

RING-NECKED DUCK - The ACOGB lists this species as being absent from the coast during the summer. A report from Effingham Co. of a bird seen 15-23 June was a rare occurrence for this region. (Tim Miller, Russ Wigh).

SURF SCOTER - A very good report of two birds seen on the north end of Wassaw Island on 12 June was received from Paul Sykes. This is a very late date for this species to be lingering in Georgia. The previous late date is 6 May.

RUDDY DUCK - Several reports of lingering birds from ELHLAF during the



month of June were received (m.ob.).

RUFFED GROUSE - The best count was on 5 July at Ivy Log Gap Road, where Ian Stephenson reported finding eight birds in three separate groups along the road.

COMMON LOON - Anne Waters saw two birds at the MBBP near Augusta on the late date of 12 June. Tim Miller reported finding a bird in Effingham Co. on 15 June.

PIED-BILLED GREBE - This species is an uncommon resident that breeds locally throughout the state, but it is rarely reported during the summer. Several reports were received from around the state this season. Marion Dobbs reported a single bird from Bartow Co. on 5 June. From the coastal region, Russ Wigh reported one bird on Skidaway Island on 8 July. At ELHLAF, Jim Flynn and Earl Horn found one bird on 17 July.

BLACK-CAPPED PETREL - A pelagic trip out of Savannah on 25 June turned up one bird about 88 km from shore (Russ Wigh et al.).

CORY'S SHEARWATER - On the same 25 June pelagic trip 15 birds were observed. The highest count was of more than 90 birds reported by Russ Wigh on a pelagic trip out of Savannah 9-10 July. The majority of birds were seen only 40 km offshore.

AUDUBON'S SHEARWATER - Two birds were seen on the 25 June pelagic trip out of Savannah (Russ Wigh et al.).

AMERICAN WHITE PELICAN - Pierre and Christopher Howard reported finding three birds at Walter F. George Lake on 4 June. The highest count was of 22 birds seen on Lake Carroll in Carroll Co. on 8 June (Bill Lotz et al.). Lydia Thompson reported a bird at the visitor center on the Jekyll Island Causeway on 25 June.

LEAST BITTERN - Marion Dobbs had a single bird at a marsh in Bartow Co. on 5 June. Ian Stephenson had seven birds at AWMA on 11 June.

GREAT EGRET - Steve Barlow had a good count of 44 birds in Bartow Co. on 18 July.

TRICOLORED HERON - Walt Chambers found two birds at ENWR on 13 June. These birds are rarely encountered away from the coast during the summer.

REDDISH EGRET - This species continues to make a good showing on the coast in Georgia. The number of birds observed continues to grow, with several reports from LSSI and Gould's Inlet during the period. The highest count was from LSSI, where Brandon Noel reported finding 15 birds (including four white morphs) on 18 July.

BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON - A bird seen on 25 July at Blackrock Mountain State Park was unusual for the mountain region (Giff Beaton).

YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON - The numbers of reports for this species in the Piedmont Region during the summer continues to grow. The ACOGB lists this species as a rare and local nester in the Piedmont. Several reports during this period from Bartow, Fulton, DeKalb, Cobb and Henry Co. may indicate an expansion of its range (v.ob.).

WHITE IBIS - The highest count away from the coast was of more than 200 birds seen at the MBBP by Lois Stacey on 30 July.





ROSEATE SPOONBILL - The highest count for the season was of 27 birds reported by Gene Keferl from the Brunswick area on 19 June. Russ Wigh had a good report of three birds away from the normal locations. He reported that Regi Sonnen found three birds on Skidaway Island on 26 July, one of which remained until 27 July.

WOOD STORK - Many reports were received from throughout the southeastern counties, suggesting that this species continues to thrive in the state. One of the more northerly reports came from Lynn Schlup, who reported seeing a bird in Oconee on 25 July.

SWALLOW-TAILED KITE - Single birds were reported from various southeastern counties (m.ob.). The highest count was of five birds reported by Bill Lotz and Dan Vickers from the overlook at the Heritage Park near Doctortown on 25 June.

MISSISSIPPI KITE - A number of reports were received from around the southeast part of the state. The most interesting report was from Jeff Madsen, who located a bird in Rockdale Co. on 20 June. The highest count was of 30 birds reported by Walt Chambers from Oxbow Meadows near Columbus on 30 June.

BALD EAGLE - Jeff Sewell and Patrick Brisse found a bird at the J.W. Smith Reservoir on 17 July. Also in Clayton Co., Carol Lambert reported seeing two young birds at ELHLAF on 22 July. This could indicate successful nesting in the area.

NORTHERN HARRIER - The ACOGB lists this species as accidental in summer, so the bird that Brandon Noel reported from LSSI on 19 July was a very interesting sighting.

PEREGRINE FALCON - The downtown Atlanta birds made several appearances during the period. Jeff Madsen reported seeing a single bird on 5 June. In Macon, Ty Ivey and Ken and Arlene Clark reported seeing a single bird on 3 July for an unusual report from that area of the state.

BLACK RAIL - Paul Sykes and Steve Holzman reported finding five birds on 18 July and six birds on 25 July in the northern Greene Co. marsh that they monitor.

PURPLE GALLINULE - Very few reports were received this period for this species. Phil Hardy located a single bird in Crisp Co. on 22 July. Other reports were of single birds seen at AWMA throughout the period (v.ob.).

COMMON MOORHEN - A very unusual sighting from the Piedmont was a bird that spent almost a month at ELHLAF during this period. Carol Lambert reported seeing a bird on 2 June, which was last seen on 24 June.

LIMP KIN - Patrick Brisse found a bird at Lake Blalock on 6 June for an amazing sighting in the Atlanta area. The bird remained long enough for many area birders to see and photograph it, before departing on 8 June. It is possible that the bird was present at this location as early as 1 June, but not positively identified until 6 June. CRC record number 2004-11.

WILSON'S PLOVER - The highest count was from LLSI, where Brandon Noel saw 50 birds on 4 July.

SEMIPALMATED PLOVER - The five birds seen in Bartow Co. on 1 June were probably late migrants (Bob Zaremba).

PIPING PLOVER - Brandon Noel reported excellent plover counts from LSSI. On





13 July he counted 19 birds, building to a high count of more than 90 birds by 31 July.

AMERICAN AVOCET - Four birds were seen on LSSI on 13 June by Brandon Noel.

WHIMBREL - Russ Wigh found two birds on Skidaway Island on 12 July.

LONG-BILLED CURLEW - Brandon Noel reported finding one bird on LSSI on 18 July, and three birds on 31 July.

MARBLED GODWIT - The highest count for the period was of more than 50 birds on LSSI on 13 July (Brandon Noel).

WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPER - Pierre Howard had a good count of 20 birds at the Bartow Co. sod farm on 1 June.

STILT SANDPIPER - The only report was a single bird seen on 26 July at the Bartow Co. sod farm (Bob Zaremba).

WILSON'S PHALAROPE - Steve Barlow and Jeff Sewell found a bird in Bartow Co. on 5 June, for the only report this season.

GULL-BILLED TERN - The high count for the period was of 20 birds seen on LSSI by Brandon Noel on 4 July.

CASPIAN TERN - Lois Stacey reported seeing two birds at the MBBP on 30 July.

LEAST TERN - Brandon Noel had an excellent count of more than 250 birds on LSSI on 31 July.

BRIDLED TERN - Two birds were seen on the 25 June pelagic trip out of Savannah (Russ Wigh et al.).

SOOTY TERN - A single bird was seen on the 25 June pelagic trip out of Savannah (Russ Wigh et al.).

BLACK TERN - Several interesting reports of birds seen in June were either early returning migrants or late migrating birds. Brandon Noel reported seeing four birds on LSSI on 5 June. Paul Sykes saw two birds in alternate plumage at Cape Charlotte, Wassaw Island, on 12 June. Patrick Leary also had a bird on 18 June on Cumberland Island. More in line with the normal migration date, Steve Barlow reported seeing five birds in Bartow Co. on 31 July.

WHITE-WINGED DOVE - There were two reports this period. Paul Sykes reported seeing a bird in Oconee Co. on 7 June. The second report was from Skidaway Island, where Andy Ward reported seeing a single bird on 24 July (fide Russ Wigh).

GRAY KINGBIRD - Several birds were reported from the Jekyll Island Convention Center during this period (v.ob.).

SCISSOR-TAILED FLYCATCHER - A male was seen throughout the period at the McDonough location, where nesting has occurred for the past several years (m.ob.).

TREE SWALLOW - Michael Beohm reported finding breeding activity at Big Lazar WMA in Talbot Co. on 14 June. Later in the period, Jim Flynn and Earl Horn reported four birds, two adults and two juveniles, at the same location on 17 July.

BANK SWALLOW - Giff Beaton had an excellent count of 12 birds at Jekyll Island on 8 July. According to ACOGB, this will be a new early date for the coastal





region.

CLIFF SWALLOW - Lois Stacey reported finding 11 active nests at MBBP on 4 June. Giff Beaton reported finding one bird at Jekyll Island on 8 July, which is a new early date for the coastal region.

BROWN CREEPER - According to the ACOGB, there are no confirmed nests of this species in Georgia, but a summer record from 27 June 1981 in Rabun Co. suggests the possibility of nesting. A report from Jeff Sewell and Bill Lotz of one or possibly two birds on 19 June in Rabun Co. is significant, and may lend additional support to the possibility of breeding activity.

BLUE-WINGED WARBLER - Several reports from the mountain region indicated sporadic breeding this season. Birds were reported from Towns, Union and Dawson Co. (v.ob).

NORTHERN PARULA - Terry Moore reported a singing male in Roswell on 11 July, unusual for that area.

YELLOW WARBLER - The only report this period was a single bird seen near Ivy Log Gap Road in Towns Co. on 1 June (Karen Theodorou et al.).

CAPE MAY WARBLER - Rusty Trump observed a very late migrating bird in his Forsyth Co. yard on 14 June. Rusty was able to photograph the bird, which was last seen on 16 June.

BLACK-THROATED GREEN WARBLER - The earliest report of dispersing birds was from KMT on 10 July, when eight were seen by Deb Zarembo et al. The highest count for the period was of 16 at KMT on 18 July (Deb Zarembo et al.).

BLACKBURNIAN WARBLER - The earliest report away from the breeding area was from KMT on 15 July, where Giff Beaton saw a single bird.

PRAIRIE WARBLER - Giff Beaton had a good count of six birds at KMT on 29 July.

BLACKPOLL WARBLER - Two reports of late migrating birds were submitted this period. Near Augusta, Fletcher Bingham observed a male bird, which may have been injured, on 13 June (fide Anne Waters). David Hedeon found a male bird singing in Atlanta on 17 June.

CERULEAN WARBLER - There were several reports by various observers of birds seen along Ivy Log Gap Road during this period. The highest count away from the breeding area was of 11 birds seen at KMT on 21 July (Giff Beaton et al.). Jim Flynn and Earl Horn set an early date record for the Coastal Plain when they discovered an immature female in Lanier Co. on 25 July.

BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER - The highest counts away from known breeding areas came from KMT. Ten birds were seen on 21 July and on 31 July (Giff Beaton et al.).

WORM-EATING WARBLER - Jim Flynn and Earl Horn found a bird in Randolph Co. on 19 June, which could possibly indicate breeding activity. Jim and Earl also found a bird in Taliaferro Co. on 11 July, which was probably an early migrant.

SWAINSON'S WARBLER - David Hedeon found a single bird still singing on 21 July at Bond Swamp near Macon.

OVENBIRD - Terry and Peggy Moore reported a bird singing through the end of



June in the Roswell area. This is close to the southern edge of this species' known breeding range in the Piedmont. Giff Beaton reported finding a single bird singing in the Ohooppe Dunes Natural Area in Emmanuel Co. on 3 June. In previous years, multiple birds have been reported singing throughout the summer in Yuchi WMA in Burke Co. And finally, Paul Champlin has reported finding nests near Augusta. These observations suggest that this species is expanding its known breeding range southward. This will be well-worth monitoring over the coming years.

CANADA WARBLER - Deb Zaremba reported finding a single bird at KMT on 28 July.

BACHMAN'S SPARROW - David Hedeem reported finding four singing birds at Piedmont NWR on 21 July.

LARK SPARROW - Jim Flynn and Earl Horn found a single bird in Turner Co. on 31 July.

SONG SPARROW - Two interesting reports of this species were received this period. Walt Chambers found a bird in the Columbus area on 12 June. Paul Sykes and Steve Holzman found three birds in northern Greene Co. on 18 July. Two of the birds that Paul found appeared to be hatch-year birds, indicating a probable southern expansion of the breeding range.

WHITE-THROATED SPARROW - Doris Cohrs reported two birds in McIntosh Co. One bird remained through 12 June, providing a new late date for the area.

WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW - Peter Range and Paul Sykes caught a very late bird in their bunting nets on 11 June on Wassaw Island. This is the only June record ever recorded for this species in Georgia. The previous late date, 28 May 1977, was also from the coast.

DARK-EYED JUNCO - Mike Jones reported a bird at his Atlanta feeder on 15 June. This is a very late date for this species to be migrating through the area.

DICKCISSEL - Several reports from Brandon Farm Road in Bartow Co. were received from various observers during the period. Joshua Spence reported finding this species on 29 June. Dot Freeman and Betty Belanger relocated the birds on 9 July at the same location. Phil Hardy saw one bird at the Cobb owl fields in Sumter Co. on 22 July.

HOUSE FINCH - Paul Sykes saw a male and female together on Wassaw Island on 10 June. This species is normally absent from Georgia's barrier islands, and this is one of the first sightings of this species in that region, indicating a possible range expansion.

RED CROSSBILL - Betty Belanger had a very interesting report of two birds at her feeder in Union Co. on 26 June.

PINE SISKIN - Betty Belanger provided a report of a single bird at her feeder in Suches on 16 June. Even more interesting were the reports from Tom Striker in Fannin Co., whom had birds visiting his feeders in late June and July. The latest date he reported seeing a bird on his feeder was 29 July.

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